



[4910-13-P]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 39

[Docket No. FAA-2018-0708; Product Identifier 2018-NM-072-AD]

RIN 2120-AA64

Airworthiness Directives; The Boeing Company Airplanes

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

SUMMARY: We propose to adopt a new airworthiness directive (AD) for certain The Boeing Company Model 737-600, -700, -700C, -800, -900, and -900ER series airplanes. This proposed AD was prompted by reports of cracks in the skin and a certain chord at three fastener locations common to the drag link assembly at the chord. This proposed AD would require repetitive inspections of the skin under the drag link assembly for any cracks, and applicable on-condition actions. We are proposing this AD to address the unsafe condition on these products.

DATES: We must receive comments on this proposed AD by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may send comments, using the procedures found in 14 CFR 11.43 and 11.45, by any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Fax: 202-493-2251.
- Mail: U.S. Department of Transportation, Docket Operations, M-30, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590.

- Hand Delivery: Deliver to Mail address above between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

For service information identified in this NPRM, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Transport Standards Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195. It is also available on the internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2018-0708.

Examining the AD Docket

You may examine the AD docket on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2018-0708; or in person at the Docket Management Facility between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The AD docket contains this NPRM, the regulatory evaluation, any comments received, and other information. The street address for the Docket Office (phone: 800-647-5527) is in the ADDRESSES section. Comments will be available in the AD docket shortly after receipt.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Alan Pohl, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Seattle ACO Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3527; email: alan.pohl@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

We invite you to send any written relevant data, views, or arguments about this proposal. Send your comments to an address listed under the ADDRESSES section. Include “Docket No. FAA-2018-0708; Product Identifier 2018-NM-072-AD” at the

beginning of your comments. We specifically invite comments on the overall regulatory, economic, environmental, and energy aspects of this NPRM. We will consider all comments received by the closing date and may amend this NPRM because of those comments.

We will post all comments we receive, without change, to <http://www.regulations.gov>, including any personal information you provide. We will also post a report summarizing each substantive verbal contact we receive about this proposed AD.

Discussion

We have received reports of cracks in the skin and the station (STA) 540 bulkhead chord at the three fastener locations common to the drag link assembly at the STA 540 bulkhead chord. The cracks were found during the accomplishment of AD 2017-02-10, Amendment 39-18789 (82 FR 10258, February 10, 2017). The crack findings indicate that fatigue stresses in this area may be higher than predicted, and current maintenance inspections do not provide adequate opportunity for cracks to be detected. Cracking in the STA 540 bulkhead chord or skin can potentially result in the inability of a primary structural element to sustain limit load. This condition, if not addressed, could result in possible rapid decompression and loss of structural integrity of the airplane.

Related Service Information under 1 CFR part 51

We reviewed Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1368, dated February 27, 2018. This service information describes procedures for an ultrasonic inspection of the skin under the drag link assembly and repair for any cracks; repetitive inspections for any cracks, including ultrasonic inspections, high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections, low frequency eddy current (LFEC) inspections, and detailed inspections; and a preventive modification if no crack is found. This service information is reasonably

available because the interested parties have access to it through their normal course of business or by the means identified in the ADDRESSES section.

FAA’s Determination

We are proposing this AD because we evaluated all the relevant information and determined the unsafe condition described previously is likely to exist or develop in other products of the same type design.

Proposed AD Requirements

This proposed AD would require accomplishment of the actions identified as “RC” (required for compliance) in the Accomplishment Instructions of Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1368, dated February 27, 2018, described previously, except for any differences identified as exceptions in the regulatory text of this proposed AD.

For information on the procedures and compliance times, see this service information at <http://www.regulations.gov> by searching for and locating Docket No. FAA-2018-0708.

Costs of Compliance

We estimate that this proposed AD affects 1,664 airplanes of U.S. registry. We estimate the following costs to comply with this proposed AD:

Estimated costs for required actions

Action	Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product	Cost on U.S. operators
Inspection	28 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$2,380 per inspection cycle	\$0	\$2,380 per inspection cycle	\$3,960,320 per inspection cycle

We estimate the following costs to do any necessary on-condition actions that would be required. We have no way of determining the number of aircraft that might need these on-condition actions:

Estimated costs of on-condition actions

Labor cost	Parts cost	Cost per product
Up to 56 work-hours X \$85 per hour = \$4,760	\$24,020	Up to \$28,780

Authority for this Rulemaking

Title 49 of the United States Code specifies the FAA's authority to issue rules on aviation safety. Subtitle I, section 106, describes the authority of the FAA Administrator. Subtitle VII: Aviation Programs, describes in more detail the scope of the Agency's authority.

We are issuing this rulemaking under the authority described in Subtitle VII, Part A, Subpart III, Section 44701: "General requirements." Under that section, Congress charges the FAA with promoting safe flight of civil aircraft in air commerce by prescribing regulations for practices, methods, and procedures the Administrator finds necessary for safety in air commerce. This regulation is within the scope of that authority because it addresses an unsafe condition that is likely to exist or develop on products identified in this rulemaking action.

This proposed AD is issued in accordance with authority delegated by the Executive Director, Aircraft Certification Service, as authorized by FAA Order 8000.51C. In accordance with that order, issuance of ADs is normally a function of the Compliance and Airworthiness Division, but during this transition period, the Executive Director has delegated the authority to issue ADs applicable to transport category airplanes to the Director of the System Oversight Division.

Regulatory Findings

We determined that this proposed AD would not have federalism implications under Executive Order 13132. This proposed AD would not have a substantial direct effect on the States, on the relationship between the national Government and the States,

or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify this proposed regulation:

- (1) Is not a “significant regulatory action” under Executive Order 12866,
- (2) Is not a “significant rule” under the DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR 11034, February 26, 1979),
- (3) Will not affect intrastate aviation in Alaska, and
- (4) Will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

List of Subjects in 14 CFR Part 39

Air transportation, Aircraft, Aviation safety, Incorporation by reference, Safety.

The Proposed Amendment

Accordingly, under the authority delegated to me by the Administrator, the FAA proposes to amend 14 CFR part 39 as follows:

PART 39 - AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

- 1. The authority citation for part 39 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

§ 39.13 [Amended]

- 2. The FAA amends § 39.13 by adding the following new airworthiness directive (AD):

The Boeing Company: Docket No. FAA-2018-0708; Product Identifier 2018-NM-072-AD.

(a) Comments Due Date

We must receive comments by [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE Federal Register].

(b) Affected ADs

None.

(c) Applicability

This AD applies to The Boeing Company Model 737-600, -700, -700C, -800, -900, and -900ER series airplanes, certificated in any category, as identified in Boeing Alert Service Bulletin 737-53A1368, dated February 27, 2018 (“ASB 737-53A1368”).

(d) Subject

Air Transport Association (ATA) of America Code 53, Fuselage.

(e) Unsafe Condition

This AD was prompted by reports of cracks in the skin and the station (STA) 540 bulkhead chord at the 3 fastener locations common to the drag link assembly at the STA 540 bulkhead chord. We are issuing this AD to address cracking in the STA 540 bulkhead chord or skin, which could result in the inability of a primary structural element to sustain limit load. This condition, if not addressed, could result in possible rapid decompression and loss of structural integrity of the airplane.

(f) Compliance

Comply with this AD within the compliance times specified, unless already done.

(g) Required Actions

Except as required by paragraphs (h)(1) and (h)(2) of this AD: At the applicable times specified in paragraph 1.E., “Compliance,” of ASB 737-53A1368, do all applicable actions identified as “RC” (required for compliance) in, and in accordance with, the Accomplishment Instructions of ASB 737-53A1368.

(h) Exceptions to Service Information Specifications

(1) For purposes of determining compliance with the requirements of this AD: Where ASB 737-53A1368 uses the phrase “the original issue date of this service bulletin,” this AD requires using “the effective date of this AD.”

(2) Where ASB 737-53A1368 specifies contacting Boeing: This AD requires repair before further flight using a method approved in accordance with the procedures specified in paragraph (j) of this AD.

(i) Optional Terminating Action for Repetitive Inspections

(1) Accomplishment of the repair in accordance with PART 4 of the Accomplishment Instructions of ASB 737-53A1368 terminates the repetitive inspections specified in PART 2 of ASB 737-53A1368 on the side of the airplane on which the repair was done, as required by paragraph (g) of this AD.

(2) Accomplishment of the preventive modification in accordance with PART 5 of the Accomplishment Instructions of ASB 737-53A1368 terminates the repetitive inspections specified in PART 2 or PART 6, as applicable, of ASB 737-53A1368 on the side of the airplane on which the preventive modification was done, as required by paragraph (g) of this AD.

(j) Alternative Methods of Compliance (AMOCs)

(1) The Manager, Seattle ACO Branch, FAA, has the authority to approve AMOCs for this AD, if requested using the procedures found in 14 CFR 39.19. In accordance with 14 CFR 39.19, send your request to your principal inspector or local Flight Standards District Office, as appropriate. If sending information directly to the manager of the certification office, send it to the attention of the person identified in paragraph (k)(1) of this AD. Information may be emailed to: 9-ANM-Seattle-ACO-AMOC-Requests@faa.gov.

(2) Before using any approved AMOC, notify your appropriate principal inspector, or lacking a principal inspector, the manager of the local flight standards district office/certificate holding district office.

(3) An AMOC that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used for any repair, modification, or alteration required by this AD if it is approved by the Boeing Commercial Airplanes Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) that has been authorized by the Manager, Seattle ACO Branch, to make those findings. To be approved, the repair method, modification deviation, or alteration deviation must meet the certification basis of the airplane, and the approval must specifically refer to this AD.

(4) Except as required by paragraph (h) of this AD: For service information that contains steps that are labeled as RC, the provisions of paragraphs (j)(4)(i) and (j)(4)(ii) of this AD apply.

(i) The steps labeled as RC, including substeps under an RC step and any figures identified in an RC step, must be done to comply with the AD. If a step or substep is labeled “RC Exempt,” then the RC requirement is removed from that step or substep. An AMOC is required for any deviations to RC steps, including substeps and identified figures.

(ii) Steps not labeled as RC may be deviated from using accepted methods in accordance with the operator’s maintenance or inspection program without obtaining approval of an AMOC, provided the RC steps, including substeps and identified figures, can still be done as specified, and the airplane can be put back in an airworthy condition.

(k) Related Information

(1) For more information about this AD, contact Alan Pohl, Aerospace Engineer, Airframe Section, FAA, Seattle ACO Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA 98198; phone and fax: 206-231-3527; email: alan.pohl@faa.gov.

(2) For service information identified in this AD, contact Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Attention: Contractual & Data Services (C&DS), 2600 Westminister Blvd., MC 110-SK57, Seal Beach, CA 90740-5600; telephone 562-797-1717; Internet <https://www.myboeingfleet.com>. You may view this referenced service information at the FAA, Transport Standards Branch, 2200 South 216th St., Des Moines, WA. For information on the availability of this material at the FAA, call 206-231-3195.

Issued in Des Moines, Washington, on August 5, 2018.

Michael Kaszycki,
Acting Director,
System Oversight Division,
Aircraft Certification Service.

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